

The Great Replacement And Christian Nationalism: Too Close For Comfort - Americans United

4-5 minutes

Americans are appalled by the recent spate of violence that has claimed lives and injured others in Buffalo, N.Y., Laguna Woods, Calif., and Dallas, Texas.

The [shooting in Buffalo](#), which resulted in 10 dead and three wounded, has attracted intense scrutiny because the 18-year-old assailant targeted a supermarket in a Black neighborhood, livestreamed the attack on social media and issued a rambling manifesto full of racial hate.

The shooter's writings make it clear that he had fallen in with a band of extremists on the internet who champion what's called the "great replacement theory," a racist, antisemitic assertion that elitist forces are working to "replace" white people of European descent with immigrants and people of color.

Media outlets are suddenly [full of stories](#) explaining the great replacement theory, scrutinizing its origins and examining how it is promoted by people like Tucker Carlson, a Fox News Channel personality. But to those of us who have been tracking Christian nationalism for a long time, great replacement theory isn't new; it had lurked on the fringes of that movement for years.

I first encountered great replacement theory in 2008 while attending the Values Voter Summit, a Christian nationalist gathering that took place annually in Washington, D.C. But the speaker, Don Feder, a former far-right columnist for the *Boston Herald*, didn't use that term. He called it "demographic winter," and during his talk, he pined for the days when women didn't use birth control and large families were the norm.

The concept had also appeared among fascist politicians in Europe, primarily [Greet Wilders](#) in the Netherlands, whom I've heard lauded at U.S. Christian nationalist meetings. Wilders has warned that Dutch culture will be "wiped away, our population replaced and our culture annihilated."

In America, Christian nationalist leaders were usually careful not to traffic in racist tropes, but the clear implication of claims of "demographic winter" was not that the world's population is slowing

down [because it's not](#); rather, it's that the "*wrong*" kind of people (Black and brown) are having children while the "*right*" kind (whites) are not. (Christian nationalists, who are essentially an arm of the Republican Party, also believe that the "great replacement" is part of a scheme to bring more Democratic voters into the country. Antisemites blame Jews for orchestrating this bogus plot.)

On the fringes of the far right in Europe and America rest "heritage" groups that champion the supremacy of "Western" culture (by which they mean white); part of their program usually involves adherence to some form of conservative, or orthodox, version of Christianity. Under the rallying cry of "traditional" values, they say women's primary duty is to produce children for the state to fend off "replacement" by whatever group (Muslims, Latin American immigrants, Roma communities, etc.) extremists have targeted to keep the population in fear.

If you think there's more than a whiff of fascism about this scheme, you're right. If you think it has champions in the U.S. media, you're right there, too.

And if you think it has prominent advocates among our country's political and extremist religious communities who are spreading this poison to others, you are, unfortunately, right again.

For evidence, we need not look beyond the carnage in Buffalo and elsewhere.

As Americans United President and CEO Rachel Laser said in a [statement](#) earlier this week, "Hate fuels hate, and dangerous white nationalism and religious extremism is a growing threat to our freedom, to our democracy and to our lives. Americans United will never stop fighting for an America that fulfills its promise of freedom without favor and equality without exception for everyone."

P.S. Jeff Sharlet, a literary journalist who has authored books on the Religious Right, has been reading the Buffalo shooter's manifesto. Two days ago, [Sharlet tweeted](#) that the assailant is "very literally a Christian nationalist."